19: Marshall M-5 (ca. 1910) 1922 AP1 Burma
Karen AP7

CHAPTER VII

MEASURES OF TIME AND SPACE. KAREN ASTRONOMY

The Seasons and the Months

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The seasons in Burma are clearly distinguished, the year being divided into two parts by the monsoon, which is the periodic wind of the Southern Asiatic tropics that for six months, between April and November, blows from the southwest off the Indian Ocean, bringing clouds and moisture which produce the never-failing rainy season, as the Karen name for it, "ta su hka," signifies. In November the monsoon shifts to the opposite quarter and the dry season or "ta yaw hka" follows, being again six months in duration. This latter period is subdivided into the cool season or "ta hkū hka," from the middle of November to the first of February, and the hot season or "ta ko hka," during which the sun is waxing hotter and hotter until the beginning of the rains in May. The rainy season has a fairly even temperature with a mean of about eighty degrees, Fahrenheit, while the dry season is marked by variations ranging from about fifty to over one hundred degrees.

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The Karen term for year is "ni" and for a generation, their longest unit of time, it is "so." Eternity is designated by reduplicating the root "so," for example, "so so," or, with its couplet, "so so xa xa."

According to Karen reckoning, the year is divided into twelve lunar months, a month of twenty-nine days alternating with one of thirty. Thus, they have six months of twenty-nine days each, which total one hundred and seventy-four days, while the six intervening months of thirty days each total one hundred and eighty days. These two totals added together give but three hundred and fifty-four days. This arrangement of the calendar necessitated the addition every three years of an extra or intercalary month to make the reckoning of time correct. But the calendar was so poorly kept that confusion arose, and the people do not agree among themselves as to the proper order of the months, or the beginning of the year, or even as to the correct interpretation of the names of the